Novacon 31
Read Me Inside!

This publication gives you all the information we think you'll need whilst you are inside the Quality Hotel; for information about eating out, cashpoints etc. please refer to your Read Me Outside!

PROGRAMME

FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY	
		11.00	Future Historic Keith Roberts	11.00	The Search for Extrasolar Planets
		12.15	Book Auction	12.30	Art Auction
		1.30	Who Needs Auctions?	1.00	badge
				2.00	Young Blood
		3.00	Gwyneth Jones Guest of Honour Speech	258 WP 3pm	
				3.30	Reverse The Polarity!
		5.00	Art and SF	5.00	Awards Ceremony
		6.30	The Weakest Link		
7.00	Opening Ceremony			7.00	2001: A Taste Odyssey Beer Tasting Sausage & Mash
7.30	Childhood's End	8.00	Who Needs Reviews?		
9.00	Journey Through The Universe with the Hubble Telescope	9.30	Fan Fund Auction		
10.30	The Last Ever Siddall & Hicks Game Show	Late	Band: Jack of Herts		

Programme Notes by Dave Hicks

Friday 9th November 2001

7.00pm Opening Ceremony
The committee welcomes our Guest of Honour and all the members of the convention. Last minute announcements and updates.

7.30pm Childhood's End
In 2001, can SF survive as a separate genre? Today, many writers don't feel the need to invent a pretend planet, they just mash up this world and remix it. Some writers who do this call their work SF and some don't. Where does this leave traditional Science Fiction?
Gwyneth Jones; Nalo Hopkinson; Paul Kincaid; Farah Mendlesohn

9.00pm A Journey Through The Universe With The Hubble Space Telescope*
The first chance of the weekend to hear our visiting scientist, Inge Heyer. Featuring Hubble images showing the wealth of objects in our Universe, the processes they undergo, and the relationships between them.

10.30pm The Last Ever Siddall & Hicks Game Show
Featuring the death of a major character.
The All Scottish Team: Ian Sorensen, Iain M Banks & Alison Freebairn.
The 33$^{1}/_{3}$% Scottish Team: Mike Abbott, Mike Scott & Lilian Edwards.

*NOTE Inge Heyer's presentation at 9pm replaces the panel "Novacons of the Future" advertised in Progress Report #3.

Saturday 10th November 2001

11.00am Future Historic: The Fiction of Keith Roberts
Paul Kincaid presents a talk about Keith Roberts, who died last year, the controversial but gifted author of such works as *Pavane* and *The Chalk Giants*.

12.15pm Book Auction
From bargain prices for doorstop trilogies to gems that haven't been in print for years, your chance to pick up something special and unexpected.

1.30pm Who Needs Auctions?
The traditional Novacon debate on what to do with some fine old fannish tradition. What place do auctions have in the programme these days? What's their purpose in twenty first century fandom, and what's the best way of doing them?
Chris Morgan; Mark Plummer; Brian Ameringen; Sue Mason

3.00pm Guest of Honour - Gwyneth Jones
Dealers' Room will be closed.

5.00pm Art and SF
Every convention has an art show, but unlike the writing, no-one seems to discuss it much. With an SF image shown by a Turner prize nominee at the Tate Gallery last year, we'll ask just what *is* SF Art, can it stand on its own, apart from the literature, and where does it fit in the broader traditions of the visual arts?
Dave Hardy; Dave Hicks; Alison Scott; Steve Jeffrey

6.30pm The Weakest Link
Meet the woman Anne Robinson's scared of. Inquisitor Alice Lawson tests the science fiction knowledge, and the nerve, of fans competing for a valuable (ish) prize. Like all quizzes, really scheduled so you can sit in the audience and just *know* you'd have done better...

8.00pm Who Needs Reviews?
We all read them and many of us have written them. Are all good reviews just by buddies of the author? Are all bad ones simply point scoring off enemies/hate figures?. Should they just be aids to buying books, or tools of the publishing industry or entertainment in their own right? Do they make a contribution to the creative environment?
Ben Jeapes; Lisanne Norman; Caroline Mullan; Martin Tudor.

9.30pm Fan Fund Auction
Support the United Fan Funds and experience Alison Scott selling you things the like of which you never knew you needed, or, indeed, existed.

Late till Later: Jack Of Herts
Live music for dancing. Back after last year's success. The guitarist really *is* called Steven King and John Harvey really *does* play the kazoo.

Sunday 11th November 2001

11.00am The Search For Extra-Solar Planets
Get out of bed in good time to hear Inge Heyer's second slide presentation of the weekend. Includes information on techniques, challenges, and current findings.

12.30pm Art Auction
After yesterday's doubtless blisteringly intelligent debate on why SF Art is good and important, your chance to take some home.

2.00pm Young Blood
The adolescent protagonist is a staple ingredient of science fiction, both in work aimed at the teenage market and the adult one. Indeed, it's in our teens that most of us "got" SF in the first place. Our panel will look at why young blood is so important in science fiction.
Gwyneth Jones; Nalo Hopkinson; Maureen Kincaid Speller;

3.30pm Reverse The Polarity!
Great writing – terrible science! Does it matter if the science in SF novels is credible as long as it's internally consistent? Isn't it sometimes more fun if it isn't? With the rise of popular science publishing, is SF the place to go for a fix of scientific sense of wonder any more?
Julian Headlong; Iain M Banks; Ken MacLeod; Justina Robson; Inge Heyer

5.00pm Awards ceremony
The Nova Awards will be presented. The raffle will be drawn with meticulous efficiency. Thanks will be extended to all those who made the convention possible and the masochists who've agreed to do this next year pointed at.

7.00pm 2001: A Taste Odyssey
The beer tasting accompanied by sausage and mash.
BEER BADGES and SAUSAGE TICKETS must be purchased from the registration desk.

Please note that at time of writing we don't expect to make any major changes to the programme. Any last minute alterations or additions will be announced at the opening ceremony and widely publicised both by notices and by the tried and tested method of a man shouting in the bar.

Dave Lally's Programme

Don't forget we also have the Dave Lally Programme in the Bescot Room (at the end of the corridor, past the Pool & Health Club); see the flip chart outside the room for details of what Dave will have on offer.

Art Show

The Art Show will be in the Sedgley and Brierley Rooms (turn right at reception and keep walking they're on your left).

Next door, in the Netherton, you will find our CD ROM art show which will feature the work of Meraylah Allwood, David A. Hardy, Colin Langeveld, Claire Smith and Bryan Talbot.

We invited artists to write briefly about the work they have supplied on CD ROM:

Claire Smith:

C-THIS SPACE And Encounter Dimensions Beyond The Universe...

My space art site at (http://www.cthisspace.com) was generated and inspired by a recent interest in space scenery, astronomy and related subjects about over a year or two ago. My interest in science and art, especially space art, coincided with my inspiration, and enabled me to produce some of the visions I had in store, that I was later able to express with the use of computer technology. Although I was only using a simple computer art format initially for my website, the medium was another adventure from the beginning, and the creating of my site right to this day has left me with more than a fare share of new ideas! The method I use is simple as I tend to stick to using only a few computer tools because I prefer a personal touch to the pictures, also the pictures were more or less to do with my experimenting with the techno tools of the computer that I do use, so they vary in theme, and as a result they have evolved over time. Some are my idea of what the outer regions of space is like in an imaginary sense. e.g. Globular Storm, while some are my view of space from what we see now. e.g. Jupiter with Io. I am always hoping to create new pictures that will eventually make more people imagine, not just by looking at what's there, but by also seeing what might be.

Colin P. Langeveld:

My conversion to computer generated graphics has re-opened my eyes to the rules of art, i.e. the misty obscurity of objects as they recede with distance; the colour, weight and sharpness of shadow when applied and the general 'balance' of a picture. The initial difference now is that I can change my designated world by the touch of a mouse. These days, my figures, mountains, oceans, space vehicles and planets are fully three dimensional, I can rotate, move or resize or vary transparency as the mood takes me. I am now no longer inhibited by the

limitations of the airbrush. I can create a starscape at the drop of the proverbial space helmet. The rings of my Saturn are at last, geometrically correct.

Although most of my object are of my own creation, some are downloaded from various websites which are then converted to my specifications.

The endless possibilities of rendering has proved to be the most fascinating of this fascinating business. The enchantment with the planet Mars has been with me since I first laid grubby fingers on THE WARLORD OF MARS at the age of 14. I've produced textures of the planet's surface by downloading images of the Martian landscape and with the blessed assistance of PHOTOSHOP 6, come as close as possible to recreating images of the Barsoomian vista.

My figures come from POSER, a splendid 3D programme specialising in the production of characters. You can clothe them, deform them or morph them as you deem fit. My only complaint is the lack of a spacesuit. This I put together from various bits and pieces.

The final rendering comes via the innovation of BRYCE 4. Here skies, mists, fog and oceans are mine to control. Following the image print-out, I return to basics and add the final touches with good old acrylics, water and brush. Hope you like the results.

David A. Hardy:

This year I have tried to include images which were not on last year's CD-ROM (though there are a couple). I tried to include a good mixture: there are paintings and illustrations from years ago, like 'Proxima's Planet v.1' from *Challenge of the Stars* (with Patrick Moore, 1972). I have Stephen Baxter to thank for digging that one out, because in *Light of Other Days*, his book with Arthur C. Clarke, he describes a scene which seemed oh, so familiar. A huge red sun in a dark red sky, reflected in a lake or sea fringed by ice-crystals, eroded volcanic hills, the 'W' of Cassiopeia in the sky with an extra star at its left – our Sun. So I e-mailed Steve, who replied thus:

>Actually I thought I was inventing that scene, especially the detail about Cassiopeia, a factoid that has always stuck in my mind, but then I remembered CHALLENGE, and looked at it again, and there it was – I'd reconstructed the scene unconsciously – so in the later drafts we made it more explicit. . . yes it *was* that painting!<

Then there are recent paintings (ie. brushes, canvas and stuff), like 'Eruption on Io' and the three circular Earth/Moon/Mars paintings which form the jacket and endpapers of my new Paper Tiger book, *Hardyware* – and (shameless plug) I have included that jacket illo too. Several of the images on this CD are also in the book, but a lot are not, because they are too new or whatever. And there are several digital pieces, too. The most recent is the discovery of another new Jupiter-like planet of another star, which was announced to the media on15 October. It *is* digital – but the landscape may seem familiar to Tony Berry (ask him and see). There are SF covers for *Analog* and books, space art, movie production art, diagrams, private commissions. . . a bit of everything, and hopefully something for everyone, I hope. And you may find some of them in the 'real' (as opposed to

virtual) Art Show too!

Meraylah Allwood:

I have spent most of my life living in the countryside, or seeking the wild places where the veil between the worlds of spirit, or faery, is thinner. I have always painted using nature as my inspiration. I try to combine the dynamic worlds of folklore and mythology with the ecology and natural history of the subjects I illustrate. I love the connection between past mythologies and folklore and the present, the way those old stories have an uncanny way of weaving themselves into daily life, until they are somehow transformed once more and reborn as new tales each generation.

We can surely only marvel at the complexity and intricacies of the natural world, the web of life to which we ourselves owe our very existence. I feel that we have all lost so much with our modern mechanistic materialistic focus, so many of us living with our backs to nature, away from the knowledge of the Earth who bore us, and away from the magic that can inspire our imaginations to grow and seek out changes. I hope that in however small a way my paintings can be part of those inspirations.

Josh Kirby (1929 - 2001)
by Steve Green
(with thanks to Rog Peyton)

As this Read Me! was readied for press, we sadly learned of the death of the artist Josh Kirby, aged 72.

Although he will certainly be best known for his cover illustrations for the novels of Terry Pratchett, Josh's first cover appeared three decades earlier, on the Panther edition of Dan Morgan's Cee-Tee Man (1954). The following year, he produced the cover for Ian Fleming's latest James Bond adventure, Moonraker.

A graduate of the famous Liverpool School of Artists, his first published portfolio was a selection of Discworld posters in 1983; sadly, its appaling production standards failed to match expectations. Fortunately, this was rectified by The Garden of Unearthly Delights (1991) and Cosmic Cornucopia (1999).

Perhaps the next Discworld novel will feature a skeletal figure with a scythe in one hand, an easel in the other and a mad gleam in its over-active gaze: Death of Artists. Meanwhile, his covers for the Discworld series ensure Josh Kirby's fevered - and glorious - imagination endures.

Food and Drink

Breakfast
Breakfast will be served in the Saddle Room Restaurant (next to the bar) from 8am until 10.30am on Saturday and Sunday, and 7am until 9.30am on Monday.

Lounge Bar
A selection of filled baguettes will be available from the bar throughout the weekend at £2 each.

Pots of Tea and mugs of Coffee will be available from the bar throughout the weekend for £1.25 per serving.

The Hotel have laid on a supply of Black Sheep Best Bitter (3.8% abv) at the special price of £2 per pint. In addition the Hotel have arranged supplies of both draught cider especially for the con.

In addition to the £2 per pint price for the Black SheepSpecial con prices have been arranged with the Hotel for the following: Worthington and Carling £2 per pint, and Grolsch, Caffreys, Murphys and Addlestones Cider £2.25 per pint.

Convention Menu
This will be served in the Saddle Room Restaurant, £5 per plate for one visit to the servery, with deserts available at £1.50 extra. (Please note that Sunday Lunch will be a full Roast Carvery at £6.50 per head.)

Friday

6pm-7.30pm	Choice of Lasagne / Steak & Mushroom Pie / Salad Bar with Cold Meat Selection / Hot Vegetarian Option
9.30-11pm	Choice of Balti/Curry dish / Hot Vegetarian Option / Salad Bar with Cold Meat Selection

Saturday

12.30-2.30pm	Buffet Selection / Hot Vegetarian Option / Salad Bar with Cold Meat Selection
6pm-7.30pm	Choice of Hot Meat Meals / Salad Bar with Cold Meat Selection / Hot Vegetarian Option
9.30-11pm	Choice of Tex Mex dish / Hot Vegetarian Option / Salad Bar with Cold Meat Selection

Sunday

12.00-3pm	Roast Carvery Selection / Hot Vegetarian Option (NB: £6.50 per head)
8pm	*2001: A Taste Odyssey* Sausage and Mash tasting in the King Charles Suite, tickets £5 per person need to be purchased from Novacon Registration

	before 5pm on Sunday!
11pm-Midnight	Bacon/Sausage Rolls on sale in the King Charles Suite for £1 each – should help absorb some of that beer!

General Information

Novacon Table

The Novacon Registration table will be open:

Friday: 5pm-6.45pm and 7.30pm-10pm for N31 Registrations ONLY.
Saturday: 10am-3pm and 4.30pm-8pm for all Novacon business.
Sunday: 10am-5pm for all Novacon/BSFG business.

From Saturday morning onwards the table will be selling: Novacon 31 full memberships at £40 and day memberships at £10 Friday, £20 Saturday and £15 Sunday; a variety of Novacon merchandise and publications from previous Novacons (£2 per set for Specials and Programme Books and a few Novacon 25 T-Shirts illustrated by David A. Hardy for just £10 each!); BEER BADGES for the Beer Tasting (£4.50 per person or your 3 bottles of beer); tickets for 2001: A Taste Odyssey (sausage & mash tasting) at £5 (on sale until 5pm Sunday); memberships to Novacon 32 (just £28.00 at Novacon 31, rising to £32.00 after the con); raffle tickets in aid of the RNIB's Books for the Blind Project.

Dealers' Room

This is in the King Charles Suite and will be open from 10am until 6pm Saturday and 10am until 4pm on Sunday. Times are subject to change.

The Art Show

The Art Show will be in the Sedgley and Brierley Rooms (turn right at reception and keep walking they're on your left). Next door, in the Netherton, you will find our CD ROM art show which will feature the work of Meraylah Allwood, David A. Hardy, Colin Langeveld, Claire Smith and Bryan Talbot. They will be open from 10am until 6pm on Saturday and on Sunday from 10am until noon, closing for the Art Auction.

2001: A Taste Odyssey

What could be a more science fictional and appropriate way of celebrating 2001 than a mashed potato tasting session? *"They peel them with their shiny knifes, and mash them... "*. So, on Sunday night (from 7pm) we will be combining the traditional beer tasting with a Sausage and Mash tasting! (Food will be served from 8pm.) This will feature a selection of sausages and a choice of plain, Black Pudding or Cheddar mashed potato. Tickets for your Sausage and Mash Tasting (£5 per head) must be purchased in advance, either from Tony Berry at the address below or from the Novacon table before 5pm on Sunday of the con. (In addition, from 11pm-12am the hotel will be selling a late night snack of bacon/sausage rolls

at £1 each to help soak up the beer!)

This latest in a long series of Novacon Beer Tastings will be using the ever-popular BYOB (bring your own beer) format. To get the ball rolling the convention will supply a firkin of Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild (6% abv) on draught as well as a few interesting bottles - the rest is up to you!

To partake of the BEER, all you need to do is bring at least THREE bottles of your favourite British or foreign beer to the convention and check them in at the Novacon Registration desk when you arrive. In return you will receive a Technicolor "BEER BADGE" which will entitle you to drink the beer at the Tasting on Sunday. Alternatively, you can also take part in the Tasting by buying a BEER BADGE for £4.50 from Novacon Registration.

All Novacon members are welcome to attend the Tasting. The convention is supplying an assortment of exotic and/or unusual non-alcoholic drinks at the Tasting, which will be free to everyone, but only those with BEER BADGES will be entitled to drink the beer and only those with SAUSAGE & MASH TICKETS will be able to partake of that culinary delight.

[Please remember, although we have come to an arrangement with the Quality Hotel regarding the Beer Tasting, this does not extend to you bringing in your own supplies of drink elsewhere during the con. The Hotel can and will charge corkage to people smuggling food or drink into the hotel!]

Gophers

If you ***have*** volunteered to be a gopher or if you ***wish*** to volunteer please report to ALICE LAWSON in the Ops Room (the Dudley room next to the Art Show).

R.N.I.B. Raffle

If you wish to purchase tickets for the annual raffle in aid of RNIB's Books for the Blind Project, Anne Woodford will be selling them around the con, but tickets will also be available from the Novacon Registration table -- Saturday onwards. In a change from established tradition, prizes will ***not*** be given out as the draw is made at the Award Ceremony. Instead prizes will be available for collection from a table set up in the Oliver Cromwell suite ***after*** the ceremony.

We have a wide variety of prizes which will be displayed near the Novacon registration table from Saturday onwards. These include a limited edition proof of THE CONFEDERATION HANDBOOK signed by Peter F. Hamilton and copies of Ann Halam's latest book, DR FRANKLIN'S ISLAND (many thanks Orion and MacMillan for the prizes they have donated).

Operations

As we are sure you are aware Novacon, like most conventions in Britain, is run by volunteers and we can't have too many of them! So if you are willing to help out at the convention -- anything from moving chairs to helping with tech ops or working on the programme, please contact Alice Lawson, in the Ops Room.

Operations will be in the Dudley Room, like last year we shall be operating

a ~~fascist~~ 'tidy' Ops Room policy, with designated areas for stuff to be stored and no non-essential furniture (or people). However, you will still be able to leave coats and bags in Ops on request and **at your own risk**.

No Smoking

We would appreciate it if you refrained from smoking in the Programme Rooms, Art Show, Dealers Room and observed restrictions in other designated areas. Please note that the *smoking* area of the Lounge Bar is to the left of the Main Entrance, facing Reception.

Dire Warnings

Please remember that the Quality Hotel is in the business of selling accommodation, drink and food for profit. Neither the management of the Britannia nor the Novacon committee will approve of people "crashing" in rooms they haven't paid for, and/or smuggling food/drink into the hotel. The Novacon committee will obviously support the hotel in any dispute with members of Novacon caught "crashing" and/or "smuggling".

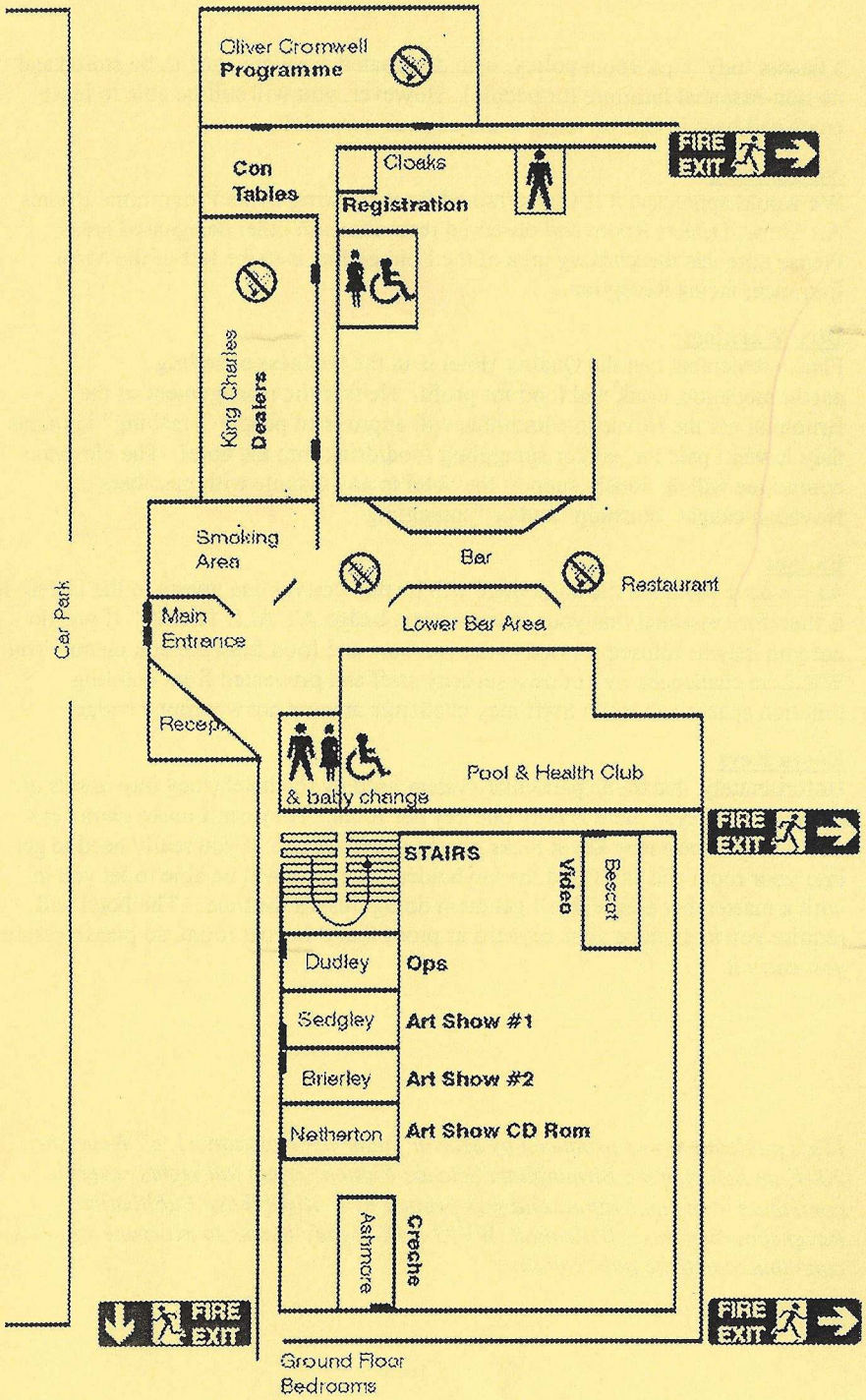
Badges

As we have not filled the hotel there will be non-convention guests in the Hotel. It is therefore essential that you wear your con badge AT ALL TIMES! If you do not you may be refused service in the con bars and food from the con menu. You WILL be challenged by our own security staff and prevented from entering function spaces and Hotel Staff may challenge anyone not wearing a badge.

Room Keys

Unfortunately, due to the particular system used by the hotel (they buy in sets of pre-punched keys), there is only one key per room. They can't make extra keys and if they issue a new key it locks out the previous one. If you really need to get into your room and can't find the keyholder, reception will be able to let you in with a master, but please don't get them doing this all the time. The hotel will require you to produce your keycard as proof that it is your room, so please ensure you carry it.

[This publication was produced by Martin Tudor for Novacon 31, 8th November 2001, on behalf of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group (all rights revert to contributors on publication) and was printed by Critical Wave Publications, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, Willenhall, WV13 1HX. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to these publications.]


Oliver Cromwell
Programme
Con
Tables
Cloaks
Registration
FIRE EXIT
King Charles
Dealers
Smoking
Area
Bar
Restaurant
Car Park
Main
Entrance
Lower Bar Area
Pool & Health Club
& baby change
FIRE EXIT
STAIRS
Video
Bescot
Dudley
Ops
Sedgley
Art Show #1
Brierley
Art Show #2
Netherton
Art Show CD Rom
Ashmore
Creche
FIRE EXIT
FIRE EXIT
Ground Floor
Bedrooms